

SRFB Mission, Roles and Responsibilities, and Funding Strategy

Adopted by the SRFB June 15, 2001 and amended September 7, 2001

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1999 the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB), following a review of the authorities granted to it by the legislature and a statewide public comment period, developed a document articulating the Board's mission, roles and responsibilities, and initial approach to making funding decisions. This document updates the Board's roles and responsibilities and funding strategy based on the experiences of the last two grant cycles and numerous comments from lead entities, project sponsors, involved citizens, and agency staff.

The Board believes its mission, role, and funding strategy will evolve as more experience and insights are gained. The Board encourages ongoing review and comments from organizations and individuals on the role of the Board and, in general, on how to improve the effectiveness of salmon¹ recovery efforts across the state.

II. MISSION STATEMENT

The Board will support salmon recovery by funding habitat protection and restoration projects, and related programs and activities that produce sustainable and measurable benefits for fish and their habitat.

III. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Salmon Recovery Funding Board

The primary role of the Board is to fund the best salmon habitat projects and activities reflecting local priorities and using the best available science. The Legislature provides the overall authority, policy direction and budget for the Board to conduct its responsibilities. The Board is responsible for design and oversight of the funding process, ensuring the best results are produced and making adjustments when necessary. The Board is accountable to the Legislature and the public. The Board will conduct its work in consultation with the Governor and consistent with the state salmon strategy *Extinction is Not an Option*. The Board's operations will be consistent with federal laws and directives. The Board will also foster appreciation and consistency with tribal treaty rights.

Success in achieving the mission of the Board requires important partnerships with the Legislature, Governor, state and federal agencies, tribes and local communities

¹ Throughout this document the term "salmon" is used broadly to include any member of the taxonomic family *Salmonidae*, which includes all species of salmon, trout, char, whitefish, and grayling.

throughout the state. Under the legislation (RCW 77.85) the Board's relationship with local communities is set forth through the creation of watershed-based lead entity organizations.

Lead Entities

Lead entities² are voluntary. Under contract with the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) lead entities can define their geographic scope and are encouraged to largely match watershed boundaries. Lead entities are essential in ensuring the best projects are proposed to the Board for funding in its annual grant process. Through WDFW and Lead Entity Advisory Group, lead entity responsibilities and tasks are described in *Working Paper on Lead Entities: Range of Activities, and Necessary Funding Levels*. The Board acknowledges this working document and supports the actions necessary for lead entity success.

All lead entities have a set of technical experts that assist in development of strategies, and identification and prioritization of projects. The lead entity citizen committee is responsible under state law for developing the final prioritized project list and submitting it to the SRFB for funding consideration. Lead entity technical experts and citizen committees perform important unique and complementary roles. Local technical experts are often the most knowledgeable about watershed, habitat and fish conditions. Their expertise is invaluable to ensure priorities and projects are based on ecological conditions and processes. They also can be the best judges of the technical merits and certainty of project technical success. Citizen committees are critical to ensure that priorities and projects have the necessary community support for success. They are often the best judges of current levels of community interests in salmon recovery and how to increase community support over time with the implementation of habitat projects. The complementary roles of both lead entity technical experts and citizen committees is essential to ensure the best projects are proposed for salmon recovery and that the projects will increase the technical and community support for an expanded and ever increasing effectiveness of lead entities at the local and regional level.

The SRFB will work to support the effectiveness of lead entities and the complementary roles of local technical experts and citizen committees. It will support the WDFW administration of the lead entity operation grants with the guidance, flexibility and support necessary for lead entity effectiveness. The SRFB will help inform the Legislature and Governor of the importance of lead entities and advocate for sufficient funding to carry out an increasing level of responsibilities and expanding effort in salmon recovery. The Board will encourage lead entity comments on its funding process and overall strategy to ensure the greatest effectiveness and efficiency. It will also sponsor programs that help develop the necessary skills and resources essential for lead entity success.

² In this paper, the term "lead entity" means the local agencies, citizens committee, technical advisory group, and lead agency that represent one or more watersheds (WRIAs) and submit lists of projects to the SRFB for funding.

IV. OVERALL SRFB STRATEGY TO SUPPORT SALMON RECOVERY

The Board will carry out its mission by funding habitat projects recommended by lead entities that protect, preserve, restore and enhance salmon habitat and watershed functions. The Board will also fund activities that are integrally related to protecting or improving salmon habitat, especially those programs that increase the certainty and effectiveness of habitat projects or address issues involving multiple lead entity areas.

A Comprehensive Approach

The Board's work will be performed with a comprehensive understanding of other efforts, activities and programs integral to salmon recovery, including harvest and hatchery practices, hydropower operations, water quality issues, setting of in-stream flows, watershed planning unit activities, governance issues, and Northwest Power Planning Council programs. The Board recognizes that work regarding water quality and instream flows will be undertaken through multiple processes, including watershed planning units under the state Watershed Planning Act. The SRFB will encourage the coordination of all related efforts undertaken by citizens through watershed planning units, other planning methods and processes, and lead entities. The SRFB encourages lead agencies and others who are preparing water quality and instream flow plans to become involved in the SRFB process by providing comments on the Board's ongoing funding process and overall strategy, and by identifying projects through the lead entity process for funding.

In carrying out its mission, the Board will advocate for all key aspects of a comprehensive approach to salmon recovery. Board decisions will be based on science and the Board will foster inclusion and coordination of scientific support at all levels of salmon recovery. The Board will require that each funded project and program be measured for success. In concert with other salmon recovery efforts, the Board will support an overall monitoring strategy to assess the long-term success of all recovery efforts. Public participation and outreach will be integrated into all actions of the Board.

Recovery Goals

An effective salmon recovery effort statewide requires specific goals that define the abundance, productivity and diversity of fish populations, and the health of riverine and marine waters that constitute recovery in each salmon recovery region of the state. A comprehensive recovery effort also requires watershed assessments of current and potential conditions, a strategy to achieve the goals developed for each watershed, a project list consistent with the strategy, monitoring to tell whether the effort is effective, and adequate funding. Some recovery regions and local watershed groups, including lead entities, are beginning the process to develop specific goals and have performed various assessments. It will take time to reach the ultimate recovery plan that includes specific goals, assessments, strategies, monitoring and funding. In the interim the Board will support lead entity efforts at the watershed level and foster efforts to develop

comprehensive regional approaches. It is important to have and encourage interim strategies at the lead entity and regional scale that guide the work in the most effective manner until all the necessary elements are in place for a comprehensive program.

Science-based Decisions

Successful salmon recovery requires decisions and actions guided by the best available science at each individual stream reach, watershed, recovery region, and statewide.

There are a number of science committees and panels at various levels across the state that provide important input to decision-making. The use of science in decisions could be enhanced through better coordination across the various science groups and between scientific work and policy decisions. There is also a need to ensure all watersheds and recovery regions have sufficient scientific support for their work.

Each lead entity has local scientific experts to inform its work. These experts often know the most about local watershed conditions and processes, including fish status and habitat utilization.

The Board will establish practices and dedicate resources to gain broad-based scientific input for its work. The Board will seek scientific support to help set the overall criteria for evaluating projects and programs, guide the allocation of funds on a regional basis in support of ecological goals, assess the technical merits of projects, and monitor success. The Board will establish its scientific support in a manner that uses the best available science and contributes to the integration and enhancement of science efforts at all levels of salmon recovery. In establishing overall guidance for funding decisions, the Board will work with a broad base of scientists, including the State Independent Science Panel, to establish a set of ecological principles that guide its decisions.

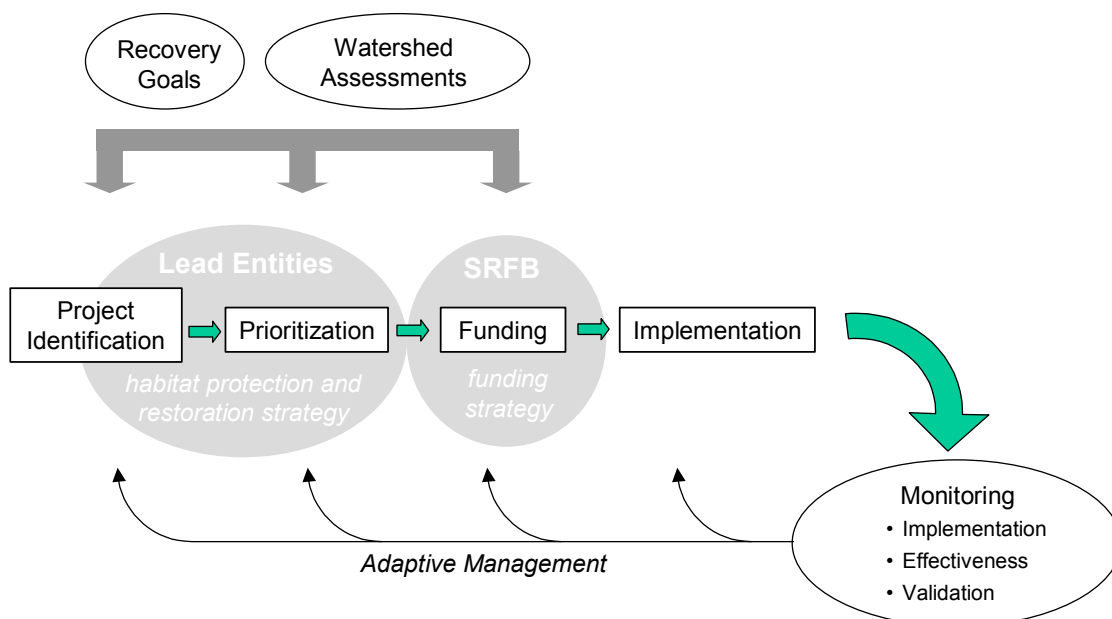
The SRFB will use a statewide technical committee to assist in the evaluation of lead entity strategies and project lists. The SRFB will direct the technical panel to conduct its work in a manner that is complementary to the efforts and insights of local entity technical experts. The technical panel will meet annually with lead entities prior to the evaluation of project lists to review lead entity strategies and prioritization processes and provide feedback. The technical panel will also review lead entity project lists and evaluate the benefit and certainty of projects. From its review the technical panel will provide lead entities with recommendations and issues about how their project lists match their project local strategy and any pertinent project questions. The Board will use the technical panel review, lead entity experts and citizen committees, and SRFB technical staff to inform its funding decisions in each grant round.

The SRFB will support and encourage permanent approaches to providing scientific input for salmon recovery efforts statewide. It will also work to ensure long-term continuity to the provision of statewide technical resources.

V. THE SRFB FUNDING STRATEGY

Together the lead entity and SRFB processes provide the means to identify the most important habitat protection and restoration projects in a watershed and prioritize those projects for funding and implementation. The two processes are integral to each other. The lead entities provide prioritized lists of projects for SRFB evaluation and funding, and the Board provides the lead entities with guidelines and criteria for strategy development and project identification and ranking. This process, guided by recovery goals and habitat assessments, is diagrammed below.

Funding Salmon Habitat Projects



The SRFB's funding strategy consists of three components: (a) a series of guiding principles utilized by both the Board and the lead entities; (b) policies and priorities for lead entity use and for Board use in evaluating lead entity strategies and the resulting list of habitat protection and restoration projects; and (c) the Board's evaluation and decision-making process.

A. Guiding Principles

Guiding principles are fundamental concepts that are intended to be the basis for developing SRFB policy. Some principles have been established by the state

legislature or are part of the Governor's salmon recovery strategy. Others simply reflect concepts of an efficient, locally based approach to salmon recovery or generally agreed on scientific principles. Many of these principles were discussed in previous sections of this document but are reiterated here since they are integral to the Board's funding strategy.

Principle 1. The primary role of the SRFB is to help ensure the best possible investment of state and federal funds in salmon recovery activities, provide accountability for those investments, and provide citizen oversight to the funding process. The Board will fund the most important salmon habitat projects and activities, reflecting current local priorities and using the best available science.

Principle 2. Successful salmon recovery requires decisions and actions guided by the best available science at each individual stream reach, watershed, recovery region, and statewide.

Principle 3. Where they have been established by federal, state and tribal governments, salmon recovery goals should guide the identification and prioritization of habitat projects.

Salmon recovery goals for species listed under the Endangered Species Act will ultimately be established by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington State and the Tribes. Recovery goals will include measures of fish abundance, productivity and diversity. These goals will be established for salmon recovery regions identified in the Washington State Salmon Recovery Strategy *Extinction is Not an Option*. The fish goals will be translated by the state, tribes and local watershed efforts into the amount and quality of habitat required to achieve the goals.

Principle 4. The level of knowledge of habitat conditions and processes should guide the type and complexity of proposed habitat projects and priority of project lists.

Knowledge of habitat conditions and processes comes from local assessments, analyses, and inventories. The greater the understanding of habitat conditions and habitat forming processes, the higher the certainty that habitat restoration and protection projects offering the greatest benefits to salmon will be selected. Lead entities that are in the early stages of assessing their watersheds and developing strategies should focus on projects that protect important habitats, eliminate blockages to functional habitats and increase the understand of local habitat conditions and processes. The projects should address the main limiting factors of the watershed as identified in limiting factors analysis. As lead entities increase their knowledge of watershed conditions and processes, complex restoration projects will be required to increase the productivity and abundance of habitat to meet recovery goals. The concepts in *Guidance for Watershed Assessment for Salmon* should be considered by lead entities in developing strategies and ascertaining the level of benefits and certainty in their prioritization

of habitat assessment, restoration, and protection projects. Lead entities and project implementers should consider the use of critical path methodology in the identification, siting and sequencing of projects.

Principle 5. Community support is essential for successful implementation of projects and projects should be designed and prioritized to build community support for overall recovery efforts.

The legislature indicated this intention by providing for “citizen-based evaluation of the projects proposed to promote salmon habitat.” The Independent Science Panel (ISP), in its critique of *Extinction is Not an Option*, also provided some insights on the importance of community support for success in salmon recovery. The ISP pointed out that bridging the understanding of the fish’s ecological needs with social/political support would determine what could realistically be accomplished in our endeavor to recover salmon. The ISP observed that science could, with some level of certainty, help us identify the set of actions that will lead to sustainable salmon runs in the future. They also pointed out that what is actually achievable is determined more by the interest, knowledge, support and cooperation of the local community.

Principle 6. Projects must identify the explicit objectives they are trying to accomplish and utilize adaptive management principles to improve success in meeting their objectives.

In order to evaluate project success, project objectives must be clearly identified. Monitoring and evaluating the results is crucial to determine project success in achieving intended outcomes and to adjust actions where the results are not meeting the objectives (adaptive management). The Board requires that projects have measurable objectives and a monitoring plan. The Board has not yet established specific guidelines for monitoring individual projects or the cumulative effects of groups of projects and applying adaptive management principles. This will be done in conjunction with the development of the state monitoring strategy and action plan.

Principle 7. While lead entities are responsible for establishing funding priorities at the watershed level, the SRFB is responsible for establishing funding priorities across watersheds.

The SRFB recognizes, however, that it is difficult to establish regional priorities with a high level of certainty without ESU or Distinct Population Segment (DPS) recovery goals for salmonid populations and functional habitat, consistent region-wide assessment data, improved analytical and decision support tools, and regional collaboration of lead entity groups. Until these things are accomplished, it is the Board’s policy to fund the highest ranked projects submitted by the lead

entities. If these projects are based on sound watershed assessments and well thought out strategies, it is likely that the projects will be effective in addressing recovery goals once these goals are established. The Board's funding policies and priorities are listed below.

Principle 8. Coordination across all levels of government and geographic scales is necessary to balance diverse interests, build community support, and provide for the efficient use of resources including the effective use of science for salmon recovery.

Limited financial and human resources should foster creativity and sharing across programs and organizations. Actions will be preferred that increase coordination, integrate efforts and leverage resources.

Principle 9. The Board will continue to work with lead entities, project sponsors, the Independent Science Panel, National Marine Fisheries Service, and other interested parties to evaluate and improve the funding process.

The Board will strive to reduce its grant preparation requirements and subsequent reporting workload, and to continue streamlining its funding process. However, the Board must continue to ensure that the highest priority projects are funded and provide accountability to Congress, the Legislature and the public for that funding. The SRFB funding process is still in the early stages of its development. Simplifying the funding process will become easier to accomplish as the Board and lead entities gain experience.

B. SRFB Funding Policies

The principles listed above are the foundation of the SRFB funding strategy and are intended to guide the actions of both the lead entities and the Board. In addition, the Board has adopted specific policies for its granting process. These policies and the resulting grant evaluation process are also a key part of the Board's funding strategy. The SRFB grant manual *Policies and Project Selection* and associated grant application materials list these policies in detail. The major policies are listed below and will be used to evaluate the strategies and project priorities of lead entities.

1. Fish and Habitat Benefits. Projects are prioritized based on the anticipated benefits to salmon, the certainty that the project will be successful in providing those benefits, and the project's cost relative to the anticipated benefits.

Benefits. How the list of projects benefits salmon and the ecosystem functions on which they depend.

Certainty. The certainty that a project will be successful in providing anticipated benefits. This includes:

- the level of certainty that prioritized projects address the important known limiting factors and in the right location and sequence;
- certainty that the type and design of the project ensures it has a high probability of success in realizing its anticipated benefits; and
- community support or opposition that might affect the success of a project.

Cost. The SRFB recognizes that currently there is no methodology for determining benefit-to-cost ratios for habitat projects. However:

- Projects should have a reasonable cost relative to the anticipated benefits. There may be more cost-effective ways of addressing the same limiting factor through alternate project sites, types and designs.
- Projects should be designed to address the project goals in the most cost-effective manner. This could include design features, materials, and use of donated materials and labor.

The concepts in Part Three of *Guidance for Watershed Assessment for Salmon* should be considered by lead entities in ascertaining the level of benefits and certainty in their prioritization of habitat projects.

- 2. Preference for listed fish populations.** In evaluating the benefits of lead entity lists and projects on those lists, the SRFB will give the greatest preference to lead entity strategies and project lists that benefit salmonid populations that are listed under the Endangered Species Act.

[This funding policy will be refined in 2001 with the assistance of technical experts and consultation with agencies and stakeholders.]

- 3. Protection of Intact Habitat.** Protection of areas with intact habitat processes and high quality habitat, especially where they are threatened by imminent harm, should be a priority.

Most scientists agree that, while habitat protection alone is not sufficient to recover salmon, it is crucial that we protect our remaining base of functional habitat and build on this base with restoration actions. In general is far cheaper to protect threatened habitat today than to restore it tomorrow. In addition, protection of habitat processes is critical to the long-term success of restoration actions.

- 4. Habitat Restoration.** Projects should be aimed at restoring natural habitat-forming processes in addition to addressing degraded conditions.

Addressing a specific habitat condition, such as the lack of spawning gravel or woody debris, may lead to short-term improvements but may not be successful in the long-term because it does not address habitat-forming process such as gravel transport and LWD recruitment. It is preferable that projects help restore

natural functions rather than only addressing symptoms resulting from disturbance of these functions. Proposals to restore poorly functioning habitat should complement the protection of existing high quality habitat in a watershed.

5. **Experimental Projects.** By their very nature, these types of projects may have a low certainty of success. However, the Board will fund experimental projects if the information resulting from the project will benefit salmon recovery in the long run. Projects must include a monitoring plan that will adequately assess their success.
6. **Assessments.** The Board recognizes that watershed-wide assessments such as limiting factors analysis do not always provide information sufficient to identify the most effective site and sequencing of projects. The Board will fund targeted assessments and feasibility studies identified as high priority by lead entities as long as the assessments and studies will directly lead to identification, siting, or design of habitat protection or restoration projects. Assessments intended for research purposes, monitoring, or to further general knowledge and understanding of watershed condition and function, although important, are not eligible.

The Board will also explore supporting assessments that include a geographic scope encompassing multiple lead entity areas or entire recovery areas. The Board will also explore supporting assessments necessary to increase the level of understanding of condition and function in a watershed and thus increase the level of certainty that recovery actions are providing the greatest possible benefits. The assessments would not necessarily lead directly to the identification, siting, or design of specific habitat projects. They would, however, be used by lead entities and others in developing or refining habitat restoration and protection strategies. This will, in turn, lead to a higher level of certainty that the lead entity project lists have greater benefits to salmon and a higher level of certainty that those benefits will be achieved.

The Board recommends that the *Guidance on Watershed Assessment for Salmon* published by the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office be used to identify and support the need for an assessment and provide guidance for the design and implementation of the assessment itself.

7. **Projects With Prior Legal Obligation.** If a local, state or federal law already provides a legal obligation to perform the habitat restoration or protection work proposed by the project, the project must provide a clear benefit to salmon and the proponent must demonstrate there would be harm to salmon recovery if the project were not conducted immediately.
8. **Programs and Activities.** Programs and activities that are not site-specific or have a geographic scope greater than a single lead entity area may not readily fit in the lead entity project prioritization process. In the past, the Board has been asked by the Legislature, Governor, and program proponents to consider funding such

activities. The Board is currently discussing the development of an approach for seeking and evaluating such funding requests.

9. **Regional collaboration.** The Board will give preference to projects and projects lists that are identified as high priority by a collaboration of lead entities, planning units, and other watershed planning efforts at a regional (ESU or Recovery Area) level. The Board will also explore other ways to provide incentives for regional collaboration.

C. SRFB Evaluation and Funding Process

The SRFB evaluation and funding process is the vehicle for implementing the principles and policies described above and is the final piece of the Board's funding strategy. The process is described in detail in grant application materials. It consists of the following main steps:

1. Lead entities work with project applicants and local technical experts to identify the best habitat projects for their area at this time. The projects costs are reviewed and adjusted by the lead entity. The SRFB technical panel (see #2 below) meets with the lead entity to comment on the lead entity's habitat protection and restoration strategy and prioritization process. Projects are prioritized by the lead entity based on benefit, certainty and relative cost.
2. A statewide technical panel composed of scientists with expertise in fish biology, geomorphology, habitat restoration, and other appropriate disciplines, assesses the lead entity's understanding of the watershed, its strategy for prioritizing habitat protection and restoration projects, and how the lead entity ranked list of projects is supported by that strategy.
3. SRFB staff identifies significant "break points" in the level of benefit and certainty for each lead entity list based on the lead entity's scores and recommendations and the technical panel's review.
4. The SRFB reviews the project lists and the technical panel and staff reports and makes a funding decision. The decision is based on Board principles and policies and information in the reports. If adequate funding is available, the Board's will provide funding to projects above the "break point". However, the Board may choose not to fund projects that it judges do not comply with Board principles and policies or do not, based on the technical panel report, offer clear benefits and certainty.

VI. Summary

The SRFB's roles and responsibilities and funding strategy will evolve over time as recovery goals are developed, more information is available on watershed condition and function, more analytical and decision-support tools are available, and lead entities and the SRFB gain experience. This will ultimately result in investing scarce public resources in projects with the greatest benefits to salmon, highest probability of success, and greatest cost-effectiveness.